



## **KATHY KUHN: In the Right Place at the Right Time**

Brevet judge and Louisiana native Kathy Kuhn has spent the past 45 years shuttling between Region 8 and Region 3, courtesy of her husband Albert's career in IT Management. In every new city, however, she seemed to land where she could benefit from the local coaches, judges, and clinicians. Later, the opportunity to judge regional and national NCAA and USA Gymnastics meets, Elite Zone meets, and Classic meets came her way in several states. "I always seemed to be in the right place at the right time," Kathy says.

Growing up in New Orleans, Kathy was not a gymnast but a dancer. She majored in Physical Education at Southeastern Louisiana College (now the University of Southeastern Louisiana) in Hammond, where she met Albert.

Their first move was to Huntsville, Alabama, where Kathy began teaching high school. A fellow teacher, Miss Ramona Jones, started a gymnastics team and hired Kathy to coach because of her dance background. "We learned with our team," Kathy recalls, "We had primitive equipment—men's parallel bars, grey horsehair mats, a pommel horse for vaulting. Later we got some panel mats, but the wrestling team took their mat away whenever they needed it." She began traveling around Alabama and met Lynette Calvin in Sylacauga, who was the pioneer of Alabama gymnastics. "She was our inspiration for learning about the sport," Kathy recalls.

When she was a spectator at one of the meets, Kathy and others were pulled out of the stands because judges were needed. "They said, here's a pen and here's some paper, give us some scores!" Back then, everyone used the same rules with medium and superior skills. Kathy eventually attended a judging clinic in Atlanta run by Delene Darst and Deb Guy (later Kornegay), who demonstrated the compulsory routines. There was a written test for both compulsories and optionals, and a film. Since Kathy hardly knew what a compulsory was she didn't pass that part, but tested successfully the next time from a test given by Ernie Weaver, former Canadian Olympian who later coached at the University of Florida.

Armed with a regional rating, Kathy judged both high school and club meets in Alabama, even judging her own gymnasts. Judges often worked alone then, considering the shortage of rated officials. Her team won the newly-instated Alabama State High School championship two years in a row in the early 70's, and a coach at a junior college near Huntsville even gave scholarships to a few of her gymnasts.

A move to Houston, Texas soon followed. Kathy quit teaching public school when her son, Alan, was born, but she soon began teaching pre-school gymnastics at a local recreation center. By this time, NAWGJ had formed, which she joined in 1974. "I was late with the second year payment, so I only got credited with joining in 1976," she laughs. Joanne Aschenbrenner, future NAWGJ President, modeled the prototype pieces of the new uniform at a subsequent National Congress. "Everything looked good on Joanne," Kathy says, "There was even a striped jacket." More successful pieces included the Association Blue skirt, jacket and reversible vest. Meanwhile, Kathy judged a lot of club gymnastics and college meets local to Texas. When the Karolyi's came to Houston to buy a club and establish their ranch, Kathy and others judged future superstars like Mary Lou Retton, Shannon Miller and Dominique Moceanu. By the mid 80's, Kathy had achieved her Elite rating and began judging a wider group of college meets. She credits former NAWGJ President Yvonne Hodge for pioneering an assigning system for the SEC, which led to the current JAS.

It was back to Region 8 in the early 90's after her son graduated from high school in Houston. This time they moved to Boca Raton, Florida, where Kathy worked with Tim and Toni Rand. "Tim and I taught *Mommy and Me* classes together," Kathy laughs. "He invented a lot of the pre-school circuits."

Four years later they moved back to Texas, this time to Austin, where she taught pre-school classes at Jim and Cheryl Jarrett's gym, Capitol Gymnastics. And, being at the right place at the right time helped out again, as their elite gymnasts provided an opportunity to critique optional and compulsory routines. With the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta approaching, many elite and Brevet judges were recruited as judging assistants on the competition floor. Kathy volunteered for a month and was assigned to vaulting. "The assistants wore khaki shorts and white shirts with green and blue leaves," she remembers, "I had to pick up all six score slips and make sure they were filled out correctly. The FIG was switching to computer scoring but judges still had to fill out slips as well as enter scores into the computer." She was there to see Kerri Strug vault when injured and was near the floor when the U.S. team received its gold medal.

The next January, a slip on the ice that resulted in a broken hip messed up her plans to attend the Brevet Course in Indianapolis. After a call to Jackie Fie, Kathy was allowed to attend the Course in New Zealand, staying with one of the vault judges at the Olympics. "They were excited to have someone from America come to their Course," Kathy remembers, "They also gave me a tour of New Zealand."

For many years, Kathy judged international meets in Trinidad and Tobago along with her pals Rene Niccolai and Judy Grenfell. She also judged the Olympic Festival in St. Louis. In the late 1990's, Kathy and her husband moved a last time, to Boulder, Colorado, where they stayed eight years. When her husband retired, they moved back to Abita Springs, Louisiana. Kathy still enjoys judging club and college meets, sometimes with Albert in tow if he can coordinate the trip with an interesting golf course! Her son, Alan, is now a veterinarian in Alabama who brings Kathy and Albert's granddaughters, Emmy and Ava, for frequent visits.

"Gymnastics is a beautiful sport – I wish I could have been able do it! Moving all over the country like I did, I found judging friends wherever I went."



***1996 Atlanta Olympics Judging Assistants  
Kathy Kuhn, Mary Lou Dillard, Myra Efenbein,  
Donna Stuart, Amy Rager, Judy Grenfell***



***California judge Piper White with Kathy,  
USAG Nationals in Baltimore, 2002***



***Kathy (top row - right) and Louisiana Judges  
enjoying their Holiday Classic 2018.***